

## **Rule allows FEHBP suspension rather than termination**

The Office of Personnel Management has issued an interim rule to allow TRICARE-eligible FEHB Program annuitants and former spouses to suspend their FEHB enrollments, and then return to the FEHB Program during the Open Season, or return to FEHB coverage immediately if they involuntarily lose TRICARE coverage.

The intent of this rule is to allow TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries to avoid the expense of continuing to pay FEHB Program premiums while they are using TRICARE coverage, without endangering their ability to return to the FEHB Program in the future.

Effective October 1, 2001, the National Defense Authorization Act for 2001 will reinstate TRICARE coverage for Medicare-eligible uniformed services retirees, their survivors and eligible dependents. TRICARE coverage will be advantageous to many Medicare-eligible military system beneficiaries who now are covered under the FEHB Program as Federal civilian retirees, family members, or former spouses. Under previous FEHB regulations, an annuitant or former spouse who canceled his or her FEHB coverage to use TRICARE coverage would not be allowed to return to FEHB coverage. Therefore, OPM has issued these interim regulations, with a request for comments, to allow these FEHB participants to suspend, rather than cancel, their FEHB coverage when they begin TRICARE coverage. Under this rule, they are allowed to return to FEHB coverage immediately if they involuntarily lose TRICARE coverage or, if not, during the next annual FEHB Open Season. Regulations have also been amended to clarify a similar situation involving FEHB-covered annuitants and former spouses. The regulations allow an individual who drops FEHB coverage when he or she enrolls in a Medicare-sponsored plan, or in Medicaid or a similar State-sponsored program of medical assistance for the needy, to return to FEHB coverage during the annual Open Season or immediately upon being involuntarily disenrolled from the non-FEHB coverage. If you have FEHB related questions, please send them to [fehb@opm.gov](mailto:fehb@opm.gov).

SOURCE: Federal Employees Health Benefits Program web page at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/tricare.htm>

## **Red Cross Needs Armed Forces Emergency Services Volunteers.**

In response to ongoing military actions, the Central Panhandle Chapter of the American Red Cross is in need of more Armed Forces Emergency Services (AFES) volunteers.

AFES volunteers provide emergency communications

between military members and their family as well as other vital services. The chapter will schedule AFES training in the near future. There are no special requirements to be an AFES volunteer, however, familiarity with the

military, such as prior military service, military retirement, or being a military spouse is helpful. For more information or to volunteer contact the Central Panhandle Chapter at 763-6587 from 8:00 AM through 3:30 PM

Monday-Friday.

SOURCE: Mr. Jim Buckley, Red Cross